

The Toxic Exposure Surveillance System (TESS) and Its Use at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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These comments are those of the CPSC staff, have not been reviewed or approved by, and may not necessarily reflect the views of, the Commission.

What is TESS?

- Database containing information on all calls made to most poison control centers in the US.
- Contains 33.8 million human exposure cases from 1983 to 2002.
- Now covers 99.8 percent of the US population.

TESS at CPSC

- CPSC buys data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers annually.
- CPSC's portion of the database includes only cases involving children under five years of age.

Contents of TESS

■ Important variables collected by TESS include:

- Patient demographics

- Age, Gender, Weight
- Much more
- No sensitive patient ID info

Contents of TESS

■ Substance information

- PoisIndex code
- Substance code (“generic” code, not necessarily corresponding to PoisIndex code)
- Formulation (liquid, cream, etc.)
- Text description of substance
- Multiple substances

■ Scenario

- What happened?
- Where, why, how

Contents of TESS

- Clinical Effects

- All symptoms

- Therapies

- Care administered at home or health care facility

- Miscellaneous

- Medical Outcome (ranges from no effect to death)
 - Route (e.g., ingestion, dermal, inhalation)
 - Management Site (e.g., home, hospital)

How does CPSC use TESS?

- **Periodic analyses of number of exposures and injuries to known hazards**

Examples:

lamp oil

methacrylic acid (nail primer)

- **New data analyses on number of exposures to suspected hazards or non-hazards**

How does CPSC use TESS?

- **NEISS and TESS are compared as tests of reasonability for each other.**

For example, if through NEISS we estimate 100,000 children under 5 were treated last year for poisoning by widget cleaners, but TESS only shows 5,000 were exposed, then the difference is not reasonable, and we would investigate further.

Limitations of TESS

- Changing participation by poison control centers from year to year
- Can't be used to analyze trends because of changing participation
- Gives us only minimum counts, not total counts

For more information, contact:

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